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DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/S:STHIBEAULT AND
JMCCARTER, VOA NEWS CA, NEA/PPD:CBOURGEOIS, DBENZE AND
AFERNANDEZ, IIP/G/NEA-SA RWINCHESTER
WHITE HOUSE FOR NSC
CENTCOM FOR CCPA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KMDR](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [OPRC](#) [SY](#)

SUBJECT: Damascus Media Reaction: Syria/US, Syria/India,
Syria/Cuba, Lebanon, Palestinian Territories, Iran (8/28)

¶1. Summary: Syrian papers reported President Asad's meeting with US civil rights leader Jesse Jackson. Talks focused on regional and international developments and the current situation in Lebanon, the Palestinian territories and Iraq, and views were exchanged about reviving the Middle East peace process and maintaining security and stability in the region. Reverend Jackson briefed President Asad on the goals of his visit to the region and confirmed that Syria has a pivotal role in the Middle East and cannot be isolated. Jackson also met with Foreign Minister Walid Mouallem and Deputy Foreign Minister Dr. Faisal Miqdad. At a news conference with Deputy Minister Miqdad, Jackson said he also brought up the subject of a prisoner swap in his discussions with Syrian leaders. Jackson said that President Asad told him that Syria is ready to offer all humanitarian assistance to make Jackson's mission a success and to free captured Israeli soldiers and Arab prisoners. Reverend Jackson pointed out that the main task of his delegation was to maintain the ceasefire and offer humanitarian aid and relief to those who were displaced and affected by the war in Lebanon, and to facilitate a prisoner exchange. Dr. Miqdad reiterated the importance of dialogue and exchange of ideas and opinions to establish a just and comprehensive peace, adding that the use of force in this region or any other part of the world is not the way to bring about a just peace.

Papers also reported Vice President Shara's and Foreign Minister Mouallem's meetings with C.R. Gary Khan, the Indian Premier's Special Envoy for the Middle East Peace Process, focusing on the latest developments in the region in the wake of the war in Lebanon and the adoption of UNSC Resolution 1701. Gary Khan said in a statement to SANA that India has not taken any decision regarding withdrawal of its troops from UNIFIL, pending clarification from the UN on UNIFIL's mission following adoption of Resolution 1701.

On Syrian-Cuban relations, papers reported Syrian Information Minister Bilal's visit to Cuba and his talks with Fernando Ramirez, Member of the Political Bureau of the Cuban Communist Party, and Marcos Rodriguez, Acting Foreign Minister. Talks dealt with means of boosting bilateral relations, and ongoing preparations for the Non-Aligned Movement Summit in mid-September. The Cuban side underscored the importance of Syria's participation in this summit due to its main role in serving

causes of the NAM.

End of summary.

12. Selected Headlines:

"President Asad discusses the latest developments in Lebanon, Palestine and Iraq and the possibility of boosting the peace process in the region, with Reverend Jesse Jackson, leader for Civil Rights for Black Americans in the USA. Jackson: Syria has a pivotal role in enhancing security and stability in the region.... Syria cannot be isolated" (Government-owned Tishreen, 8/28)

"Nasrallah, SecGen of Hizbollah: Syria has been supporting the Resistance since 1982; Syria can announce that it is a partner in the 2006 victory. Nasrallah confirms: Israel persists in violations of UNSC Resolution 1701.... The Resistance reserves the right to respond to any Israeli attack as long as occupation continues" (Government-owned Tishreen, 8/28)

"Syrian Vice-President Shara and Foreign Minister al-Mouallem discuss latest developments in the region following the Israeli aggression with Special Envoy of Indian Premier.... Stability depends on implementing international resolutions and ending occupation" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 8/28)

"Cuba: President Asad's participation in the Non-Aligned Summit is important. Information Minister Bilal holds talks in Havana on enhancing bilateral relations and preparing for the NAM summit in September" (Government-owned Tishreen, 8/28)

"Syrian Ambassador in Washington: President Bush's endeavors to isolate Syria have weakened US diplomacy" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 8/28)

"Israel rejects lifting siege on Lebanon except on conditions. President Lahoud calls on UN SecGen Annan to uncover Israel's use of internationally banned weapons" (Government-owned Tishreen, 8/28)

"More than 10 Palestinians killed or injured in Israeli shelling of Gaza. Occupation forces arrest Mahmoud Musleh, Chairman of the Palestinian Legislative Council" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 8/28)

"Moscow confirms that Iranian nuclear program is peaceful. Italy proposes to be a partner in the negotiations. Tehran successfully test-fires a new submarine-to-surface missile, the Thaqeb" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 8/28)

13. Editorial Block Quotes:

"Arabs Must Be Very Careful"

An unsigned editorial in independent weekly magazine "Abiad wa Aswad" said (8/28): "It is obvious that the US-Israeli scheme in the region was based on the following points: First, US escalation against Iran on the pretext of Iran's endeavor to obtain nuclear weapons. Second, maintaining Israel's security by hitting Hizbollah. Third, making a deal with the Arabs during the period of escalation to isolate them in the forthcoming confrontation with Iran....

"But the recent war has foiled the US-Israeli scheme at an early stage. Israel has failed to hit Hizbollah in Lebanon. This had an adverse impact on the US and Israel, whose images have been shaken, at least in the Arab and Moslem region....

"As Arabs, we must be extremely careful in the next stage. Neither a strike nor a deal will not be in our interests. We have to make political, military and diplomatic efforts day and night to avoid wasting this strategic victory achieved by Hizbollah and to build a truly new Middle East in which we have final say."

"Care of Bolton and His Lebanese Friends"

Ahmad Dawwa, an editorialist in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (8/28): "The Israeli violations of Resolution 1701 are repeated daily while the international community is just watching, as if Israel were above the law....

"We wonder why the advocates of freedom and sovereignty in Lebanon, who welcomed the Resolution and moved to fulfill Lebanon's obligations under it, are not using their friendships with the United States and its representative to the United Nations, John Bolton, who was decorated with the Cedar Medal, to stop Israeli violations and prove that the Bush Administration does indeed respect them....

"The fact that these people are hiding suggests that they were instructed to remain silent about the Israeli violations and divert attention to other issues that would add a new crisis to serve Israel's interests....

"Doesn't the call unleashed by some of these people to deploy international forces on both sides of the Syrian-Lebanese border -- although Resolution 1701 does not stipulate this -- constitute a gratuitous service to Israel, whether intentional or not? Don't the baseless claims by this team about the smuggling of weapons between Syria and Lebanon constitute a cover for the repeated Israeli violations of Lebanese airspace and Resolution 1701?

"These practices by the anti-Syria camp in Lebanon are very dangerous to Lebanon's security and peace and also to the sovereignty for which they shed crocodile tears....

"The talk about deployment of international forces on the border with Syria paves the way for the complete cancellation of the Lebanese Army's role. If this is not one of the missions of the national army, Lebanon will turn into another Gaza: [controlled by] Israel from the air, the sea, and the south, and the international forces from the east and north. Is this how sovereignty is achieved and freedom is preserved...?

"Some of the false advocates of sovereignty in Lebanon prove time after time that they are just tools in the American plan."

"Winds of Israeli Defeat"

Izz-al-Din Darwish, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, wrote (8/28): "Europe, which during the aggression appeared unable to do anything in favor of Lebanon at the Security Council, is now using all its ground, naval and air power and its technical expertise to provide protection for Israel from a potential, not actual, danger....

"Europe decided to send about 7,000 soldiers to the UNIFIL force in South Lebanon; that is, a soldier for every seven Lebanese citizens in the towns and villages south of the Litani River. Some European countries, like France, do not mind sending a soldier for every three Lebanese citizens. For Israel's security requires taking such measures and more, and Israel's satisfaction is the ultimate objective of some European presidents and heads of government, who claim, day and night, to be friends of Lebanon....

"This European enthusiasm was a result of Israel's defeat in the war with Hizbollah.... The United States, Israel, and some Europeans want to circumvent UNSC Resolution 1701. They claim that it authorizes them to disarm Hizbollah and control Lebanese security. They coordinate with their team in Lebanon for this purpose. This team, which hates the Resistance and which is connected with Israel, hopes that the international forces will deploy throughout Lebanon. But UN Secretary General Kofi Annan shocked all of them when he stressed that Resolution 1701 does not allow this....

"All cards have been exposed. The resistance option has been entrenched. And the winds of the Israeli defeat have swept away

the plans and dreams of the 14 March team."

Corbin